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ABSTRACT

The document presents a comparative study of racial discrimination towards American Indians in Canada and the United States. The main focus disputes the belief that Canadian Indians were treated more humanely because of 2 factors: (1) Indian wars raged throughout the history of the U.S. and less so in Canada, and (2) unlike the U.S., treaties were strictly adhered to in Canada, thus reducing legitimate dissatisfaction to a minimum. The Canadian Government had more control over the Indians because of 4 classes of people--the fur traders, the churchmen, the Federal policemen (Royal Canadian Mounted Police), and the Indian agents. The influence of these groups upon the Canadian Indians is discussed. (FF)

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Patterns of Racial Discrimination: Aboriginal Administration in Canada and the United States

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If attuned to recent events which involve aboriginal people in North America one would detect signs that a new Indian era has been born. For example, while most people were enjoying their Thanksgiving dinners last year aboriginals across the United States were busily protesting. One group assaulted the Mayflower II, removed the Union Jack and burned it on Plymouth Rock. 1/ It is especially significant that this flury of activity took place on the heels of the occupation and looting of the headquarters of the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Washington, which was condemned by governmental officials and conservative aboriginal leaders.2/ Since Thanksgiving, of course, there has been the second battle of Wounded Knee.

The growing militancy among aboriginal people in the United States can be seen by other acts of overt resistence during the past few years. Alcatraz was occupied for 19 months, while military bases in various States were occupied for shorter periods of time as was the sacred ground in the Black Hills of South Dakota.3/ Further, aboriginals "eliminated" Hogansburg, New York, and marched 1,000 strong in Gordon Nebraska, to protest the lack of an inquest into the death of one of our people.4/

Signs of this new era are also present in Canada. One has only to recall the protest marches in Kenora, Winnipeg, and Edmonton.5/ Further, there was a six month sit-in over conditions at Cold Lake, Alberta, and the burning of an all-white school in Restigouche, Quebec as well as other acts of overt resistence such as the

demands for justice at Cornwall, Loon Island, Sudbury, The Pas, Brandon, and in the Fred Quilt case at William's Lake, British Columbia.6/ One can also call to mind the widespread protest in 1969 over the federal government's proposal to officially terminate aboriginal rights and treaties, and the current protest over northern development.7/ In spite of all these acts of overt resistence in Canada however, it is clear that aboriginals in the United States have tended to be more forceful in their protest.

One common explanation for the difference in the form of protest by aboriginals in the United States and Canada is the popular belief that the treatment accorded our people in Canada was, and is, more humane.8/ This popular belief is based upon two major assumptions. First, there is the assumption that while Indian Wars raged throughout the history of the United States there were few such wars in Canada. The second major assumption is that unlike the United States, treaties were strictly adhered to in Canada, thus, legitimate dissatisfaction was reduced to a minimum. In addition to questioning these two assumptions, there are a number of disquieting facts that should force us to re-examine the validity of this popular belief.

One disquieting fact is that in Canada there is little demand for social justice for our people. The Europeans are just not as concerned about our state of deprivation, etc., as are Europeans in the United States.

Another related fact which is disquieting is that in Canada there are few aboriginal voluntary associations which exist without explicit governmental approval. For example, the aboriginal population in the United States is approximately 792,000 (1970) and it is estimated that there are over 3,000 voluntary associations, most

of which are not funded by any level of government. In Canada, on the other hand, there are approximately 550,000 aboriginals (1972) but there are only about 150 voluntary associations, almost all of which recieve direct funding from the various levels of government.

It is my contention that these disquieting facts indicate that the European government in Canada has been, and is, more repressive than theEuropean government in the United States. The purpose of this paper will be to explore these patterns of racial discrimination.

It is important to briefly note some of the more striking similarities in the basic aboriginal policies followed by both Canada and the United States. First, in both countries the major original colonial power was Great Britain. The policy of this power toward aboriginal people in North America remained unchanged after the United States gained its independence in 1783, and after Canada attained Confederation status in 1867.

Second, while the European colonial governments of both countries continually expressed a strong desire for peaceful relations with the various Indian Nations, this peace was always enforced on European terms.

Third, in both countries the European invaders exhibited an insatiable hunger for Indian Land, a hunger which is still not satisfied.

Fourth, the European governments of both countries made a host of treaties with the various Indian Nations and in both countries the spirit of the treaties were violated. It should also be noted that these treaties were far from "just" and in some of the early treaties of "Peace and Friendship" the

the European powers demanded aboriginal hostages as security.9/

Fifth, since the European governments of both countries viewed the Indian Nations as remnants of a passing historical period the only acceptable alternatives were physical or cultural genocide. It is a matter of public record that physical genocide was practiced in both countries. In Canada and the United States our people were massacred, monetary rewards were offered for Indian scalps, and smallpox was deliberately introduced in order to eliminate the "problem".10/ While the United States government tended to openly pursue a policy of physical genocide, both countries for many years neglected the medical needs of our people to a degree which almost insured the death of the Indian Nations. It is also a matter of public record that both countries actively pursued the goal of cultural genocide. Native religions were outlawed; children were kidnapped from their homes and sent to boarding schools where our culture was forceably discouraged; and European forms of religion,politics and education were imposed.

Finally, in both countries there is no difference in the low social and low economic standing of the aboriginal people, although the educational level of our people in the United States is slightly higher than in Canada.

From these few comments on the differences and similarities between the situation of aboriginals in Canada and the United States, it may be seen that I believe that any explanation for the differential behaviour between aboriginals on either side of the border is more likely to be found in the manner in which the policies were administered rather than in differences in basic policies. For example, we have noted that it was the policy of both

governments was to acquire Indian Land. In the United States this tended to be accomplished in the following manner. First, Europeans intruded upon Indian Land. Inevitably these intrusions lead to retaliation by the aboriginals. Then, colonial military forces entered the disputed area to establish "peace" and a new treaty was "negotiated" which gave the Europeans the land and relocated the aboriginals to more remote areas of the country where the process would be again repeated at a later date. In Canada, the European government paid their Indian Commissioner 10 per cent of the monies collected from the sale of Indian Lands.11/ Thus, in order not to starve, the commissioners had to be very skillful land agents indeed.

It is important to note from this example that the end result was the same, the land base of the Indian Nations continued to shrink. Most people, or course, would argue that it is more humane to buy land (even at an unreasonably low price) than to kill off the owners. But the issue is not that clear. In both cases the land was stolen, in one instance by force, in the other by fraud and guile. In point of fact, it may be psychologically worse to discover that you have lost your birthright by fraud than if superior military strength forced the land from your hands. In the latter case the enemy is clearly defined, as are the power tactics needed to win the struggle. In Canada, on the other hand, while the same bitterness and anger exists the enemy is blurred by the fact that the aboriginals were smothered by guile and it is not clear as to the type of tactics needed to insure success. Be this at it may, there are other considerations in the administration of aboriginal affairs that should be examined.

The most significant variation I have observed between Canada and the United States in regards to aboriginal affairs is in the amount of control exercised by the administrators. While both countries tried to exercise complete control over their "wards" Canada was more comprehensive, and in many ways more successful.

In my opinion, one of the most important reasons for the success of the control system in Canada was the stability (over time) of the Europeans who were most intimately connected with aboriginal affairs, that is, the fur traders, the churchmen, the federal policemen (R.C.M.P.), and the Indian Agents. It is my hypothesis that these four classes of Europeans remained in positions of authority and power for longer periods of time in Canada than did their counterparts in the United States. These four classes of Europeans encompassed the economic, religious, political, social and legal aspects of the aboriginal world and formed a comprehensive system of control, a four cornered "blanket" which covered the Indian Nations.

Rather than present a test of this hypothesis the remainder of this paper will be devoted to a general discussion of the hypothesis. First, I want to discuss the fur traders.

It is public knowledge that the fur traders and their trading posts lasted for a longer period in Canada than in the United States. While trading posts such as Hudson Bay are now unknown in the United States they are still an important consideration in the economic life of many northern Canadian communities. Further, from what little information is available on the relations between these traders and the European government, it is clear that they were part of the colonial power structure. One must remember

that the Hudson's Bay Company was chartered by Great Britain and the traders were licensed by the colonial government. Thus, it is not unreasonable to suppose that they provided the colonial government with widely dispersed bases of power which was used to control and unify the economic life of the widely scattered Indian Nations.12/

Various denominations of Christian churchmen followed the fur traders. In Canada, missions were quickly established throughout the Indian Nations. Many of these churchmen, especially those of the Roman Catholic faith, saw their tasks as being life-long and they rapidly learned the language and the ways of our people and became crucial linkages between our people and the European government. In the United States, on the other hand, most churchmen apparently did not see their Indian missions as vineyards which required their personal devotion for life. Another difference is that in Canada the colonial government and the various churches saw their interests as being compatible, and in most areas the church became an extension of the government. This pattern was especially true in the field of education where the colonial government sold this vital function to the various churches. It is a matter of public record that churchmen on both sides of the border did all in their power to destroy the aboriginal religion and our way of life. It seems logical that where the churchmen were stable over time and acted with the authority of the European government, as its agent, a greater degree of control over aboriginal life styles, etc., would result.13/

The third point of our four cornered "blanket" is the North West Mounted Police (now the Royal Canadian Mounted Police). Their vital role in the settlement of western Canada has been

documented in other sources. We can note, however, that there was no comparable para-military force in the United States. Control over aboriginal affairs in the United States was left in the hands of Indian Agent and the Army. Thus, when an Agent had more trouble than he could handle his only recourse was to define the problem as an "uprising" and call in the Army. As one can imagine this constant threat of "overkill" was anticipated and deeply resented and often insured armed conflict. In Canada, on the other hand, the Agent could call upon the Mounted Police and the situation could assume proper proportions without having to be defined as an "uprising". As a result, most disputes in Canada were easily diffused. It is also significant that for many years the major role of the North West Mounted Police was the supervision of the aboriginal population and in many instances they acted as Indian Agents in distributing supplies, etc.. Because of this role they were able to develop cooperative working relations with the traders, the churchmen, and the Indian Agents to manipulate the aboriginal people to conform to the wishes of the federal government.14/

While the preceeding classes of Europeans contributed their fair share to the suppression of the aboriginal people, the Indian Agent and his superiors were the crucial link in the fourth corner of the "blanket" which was used to cover the Indian Nations.

It is interesting to observe that few studies exist in Canada on the actions of Indian Agents and their superiors. In the United States, however, there are many studies about these people. The reason for this difference is understandable. In the United States the Indian Agent was noted for being a political appointee, which implied that the Agent would receive additional income from

the illegal sale of supplies, etc., that should have gone to the aboriginal people. The Agents themselves were not a particularly colorful breed but they made good newspaper copy in the never ending public political dogfights that occur in the States. Rare indeed, however, do we hear of corrupt Agents in Canada, although undoubtedly there were some. The basic reason for this is that in Canada the Agent was usually not a political appointee in the usual sense of the term but more akin to a civil servant. Thus, he had a career in the federal service. In addition, I suspect the opportunities for widespread corruption were reduced in Canada by the federal government's requirements for fastidious records. I also suspect that because of the career orientation of the Agents in Canada they acted to insure that every facet of Indian life was under control. Unforseen events might cause the abrupt end to a career. In the States, on the other hand, the Agent had to make the most of a temporary appointment and tended to refrain from too much involvement with the aboriginals as long as relative tranquility was obtained.

Of particular interest to students of race relations are the different strategies the Agents and their superiors used to insure subordination of the aboriginal people in Canada.15/

For many years the colonial powers maintained that they wanted the aboriginal people to become sedentary and take up farming. Yet in 1896 when aboriginals requested the federal government to provide machinery to enhance their agricultural capability it was refused on the grounds that with machinery the aboriginals would be able to compete favorably with European farmers. Although the equipment was refused and the government formally abandoned the objective of making aboriginals effecient farmers the Europeans

continued to give lip service to this objective and critisized the aboriginals for failing to become farmers.16/

Another example of a conflict between stated objectives and racist actions concerns the formation of voluntary associations. After the submission of the Indian Nations in Canada our people were dispersed to widely scattered reserves in order to insure the white mans' peace. With the dispersal was the concerted attempt to destroy all forms of tribal government and organization. Further, the colonial government acted to insure that meaningful contact between the isolated reserves would not occur. No Indian was permitted to leave the reserve without a signed pass from the Agent which stated the duration and purpose of the trip. Without this pass, which was used into the 1940's, Indians were subject to arrest by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.17/ In addition to direct control on the movements of aboriginal people band funds could not be used for trips to other reserves for the purpose of organizing together to deal more effectively with the federal government. Thus, for well over 70 years the various reserves were forceably kept apart while the European government continued to give lip service to the objective of self-determination. The role of the R.C.M.P. in this effort is particularly instructive.18/

In short, the aboriginals in Canada lived under the ever watchful eyes of the Indian Agent and his superiors. Even marriages, in some cases, were subject to the approval of the district office.19/ The Indian Agent not only had almost absolute control over the lives of his "wards", he fully exercised his power. With the aid of the traders, the churchmen, and the Mounted Police the "blanket" covered the Indian Nations and there were few, if any,

avenues of redress. In point of fact, after the churches sold their services to the European government there were no non-governmental personnel in close contact with the aboriginal people.

In the face of so much power which was used to suppress our people in Canada it is easy to understand why aboriginals in the United States tend to be more aggressive. In the United States the four corners of the "blanket" either never existed or was never interwoven well enough to be used effectively. The blanket never protected us, nor did it smother our desire for freedom. The traders, the churchmen, the military and the Indian Agents were but shadows that relatively quickly passed across our faces and the sun would once again re-appear to warm the desire for freedom. In Canada, however, as co-operation between the four corners of the "blanket" increased the shadows deepened. Today, in Canada, the strands of webbing (co-operation) which connected the four corners of this "blanket" and blocked out the sunlight are being systematically shattered by a variety of forces, many of which are beyond our control. With the sunlight to warm the desire for freedom institutionalized racism is coming to an end and a new era for the Indian Nations is being born.

1/ "Union Jack burned at Plymouth Rock," Vancouver Sun, November 24, 1972

2/ "U.S. Indians end occupation after seizing documents." The Globe and Mail (Toronto), November 9, 1972

3/ "Indians lose hold on Alcatraz," Ottawa Citizen, June 14, 1971
Jack D. Forbes, "Alcatraz: What its seizure means to Indian People," The Warpath (San Francisco), 1970, 2:5
Walter M. Morrison (reporter) "Old Coast Guard Station occupied by militants," Milwaukee Journal, August 14, 1971
"35 Indians evicted from Naval Station: Sioux Treaty cited," The New York Times, May 22, 1971:
"60 Indians occupy Mt. Rushmore Peak to push demands," The New York Times, June 7, 1971

4/ "Indians 'eliminate' Hogansburg," Ottawa Citizen, May 17, 1971
"1,000 Indians invade town in Nebraska," The Globe and Mail (Toronto), March 8, 1972

5/ "Indians march for freedom," The New Nation (Winnipeg), October 1972
"Kenora Indians stage march," The Winnipeg Tribune, November 23, 1965
"Indian, Metis stage march," Edmonton Journal, July 30, 1966
Fred Favel, "Wabasca ... a lession in politics," Edmonton, unpublished manuscript, October 1967

6/ "Chretien signs Cold Lake agreement: Alberta Indians get their school, end six-month sit-in," The Globe and Mail (Toronto), April 22, 1972
"All-white school burned," (Restigouche, Quebec) Montreal Star, September 30, 1971
"Submissions to Kenora Town Council, re: Indian-non-Indian relations," Kenora, unpublished manuscript, November 22, 1965:
"Aid Kenora Indians' brief," Canadian Labour, January 1966
"Indians-Metis demand C.F.I. employment rights," The Pas Herald , September 30, 1970
Michael Posluns, "Conflict at Akwesasne," Canadian Welfare, March-April 1971
"Press Release: re Judge Collins of Sudbury, Ontario," Ottawa, Native Council of Canada, April 21, 1972
The Case of Fred Quilt, William's Lake, British Columbia, The Fred Quilt Committee, 1972
"Indian group quits Brandon inquiry," Winnipeg Tribune, February 22, 1972

7/ Harold Cardinal, The Unjust Society: the tragedy of Canada's Indians, Edmonton, M.G. Hurtig, 1969
"Indian leaders attack government over new Indian policy," Indian-Eskimo Association of Canada Bulletin, July 1969
Citizens Plus, A presentation by the Indian Chiefs of Alberta to the Government of Canada, June 1970
A Declaration of Indian Rights: the B.C. Indian Position Paper, The Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs, November 1970
Wahbung: Our Tomorrows, The Indian Tribes of Manitoba, October 1971

7/ (cont'd)
The Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians Position Paper, November 1971
Boyce Richardson, James Bay: the plot to drown the north Woods, Clarke, Irwin 1972

8/ For example see "Canada's treatment of Indians," Canadian Gazette, December 22, 1890; "Our Indian Wards," Toronto Mail April 20, 1890; and "An object lesson for the States, Canadian redskins to go to World's Fair," The Globe, June 1893

9/ "And we do in like manner further promise and engage that for the more effectual securing of the due performance of this Treaty and every part thereof a certain number, which shall not be less than three from each of the aforesaid Tribes, shall from and after the ratification hereof constantly reside in Port Frederick at St. Johns or at such other place or places within the Province as shall be appointed for that purpose by His Majesty's Governors of the said Province as Hostages, which Hostages shall be exchanged for a like number of others of the said Tribe when requested." Treaty of Peace and Friendship concluded with the delegates of the St. Johns and Passamaquody Tribes of Indians at Halifax, February 1760

10/ See Sir Jeffery Amherst correspondence with Colonel Bourquet: "Might we not try to spread smallpox among the Indians? We must in this occasion make use of every devise to reduce them", he wrote. "I will try" answered Bourquet, "to introduce smallpox by means of blankets, which we will cause to fall into their hands". "You will do well" he wrote again, "to try to spread smallpox by means of blankets, and by every other means which might help to exterminate that abominable race," Emile Lauvriere La Tragedie d'un Peuple, Paris, 1922, quoted in Dudley J. LeBlanc , Acadian Miracle, LaFayette, La, Evangeline Press, 1966, p 275. See also, Karl H. Schlesier, The Indians in the United States: An Essay on Cultural Resistance, Wichita Kansas, Wichita State University Bulletin, November 1969
On scalping: "We do hereby promise a reward of thirty pounds ($150) for every male Indian prisoner above the age of sixteen years brought in alive or for the scalp of each male Indian: twenty-five pounds for every Indian woman or child brought in alive," Proclamation, May 14, 1756,
On massacres see: James P. Howley, The Beothuks or Red Indians, the aboriginal inhabitants of Newfoundland, Cambridge University Press, 1915; and Frank G. Speck, Beothuk and Micmac, Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, 1922.

11/ "I have the honor to inform you that, by an Order in Council on the 18th Inst., you have been appointed, under the provisions of Act 31 Victoria, Chapter 21, Agent for Indian Affairs in the Province of Nova Scotia with an allowance of ten per cent on all money collected by you in that capacity," Letter Hector L. Langevin, Secretary of State, to Samuel P. Fairbanks, Halifax, N.S., September 28, 1868.

12/ "There are other interesting by-products of the study which may be indicated briefly. Canada has had no serious problems with her native peoples since the fur trade depended primarily on these races. In the United States no point of contact of such magnitude was at hand and troubles with the Indians were a result." Harold A. Innis, The Fur Trade in Canada, 1930, (University of Toronto Press, 1970, p 392)

13/ See for example: Robert J. W. Garthson, The imperial process of attempted deIndianization in British-Upper Canada to the year 1860: Protestant missionary-government co-operation in the destruction of the material bases of Indidian culture, and Indian response, PH. M. dissertation, University of Waterloo, 1970; and Jacqueline J. Kennedy, Qu'Appelle Industrial School: 'Rites' for the Indians of the Old North West, Master's thesis, Carleton University, 1970.

14/ See for example: Jerry T. Gambill, "Sitting Bull: Canada's Indian Hero," Ottawa, unpublished manuscript, May 26, 1968. Also, Iris Allan, White Sioux; Major Walsh of the Mounted Police, Gray Publishing Co. 1969, p 150.

15/ Robert E. Park, Race and Culture, Glencoe, Ill., Free Press, p 227

16/ Letter dated August 29, 1896, Deputy Minister Reed to Mr. Forget, Indian Commission, Indian Affairs, Ottawa

17/ For a copy of this type of pass see The Native People (Edmonton) January 1972

18/ See for example: Jerry T. Gambill, "The Thunder Water Movement: An Anthropological Examination of the Indian Affairs Branch to Stress," Akwesasne Notes, (Roosevelt, N.Y.) Autumn 1971 Also see "An Act to amend the Indian Act," Assented to March 31, 1927, 15 George V. Chapter 32, Section 6.

19/ "Marriage between pupils and outsiders who have not had the advantage of training at one of our Institutions should receive no encouragement, and in no case should a marriage be allowed to take place without consent being first obtained from this office." Circular Red Group 10, Volume 1135, Office of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Regina, January 14, 1895